

COMMON SENSE IN GOSPEL BUSINESS.

The appeal of our Foreign Mission work ought to touch every Christian heart. There is a real need for larger resources with which to maintain these outposts of Christ among the millions of the heathen world. This need has not been caused by extravagance or carelessness in the management of the work. On the contrary, the administrative expense has been kept at such a low percentage that we are notable among the Churches of Christ in the respect. Nor is it true that this present need has been caused by untimely zeal on the part of the leaders of this work. They have not projected a great advance for which the Church is not able reasonably to provide. On the contrary, the policy has not been enlargement, but retrenchment. Our foreign missionary program has been cut to the quick. The call to-day is for means to protect the investment of prayer and sacrifice and money which we have already made. It is evident that if we are to exercise

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we must protect the investments which we have already made in our Foreign Mission work as it now exists.

The General Assembly, realizing these facts, has appointed a special time for special effort to protect our Foreign Mission interests against debt and loss. This appointed time is the first three weeks in February. What are you planning to do about it? There are three things which you may do.

1. You may do nothing.
2. You may make a lukewarm, half-hearted effort, which will come to little or nothing.
3. You may, with earnestness and prayer and real effort, make it a time for saving our Foreign Mission work

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from danger and distress. Which shall it be for you? We face the possibility that this special time in February, already consecrated with prayer and looked forward to with eager hope, may be an

Opportunity Lost by Neglect.

There are many interests clamoring for our attention and support. It is always so. This special period in February may be overlooked. It may be passed by because not locally convenient to you. Let every church, large and small, in the city and in the country, whether local conditions seem promising or not, have missionary preaching and prayer and giving. Let each in its own condition but do what it can and God will make it a time of joyful relief from the strain in our Foreign Mission work. There will surely be

Success in a Pull Together.

This is not the business of the secretaries. It is the personal business of every Christian. In every church there are those who love this mission cause. Let the lover of missions in every church begin now to pray and labor with this purpose: "In my church this special call of the Lord's work shall not be overlooked. We will make a special effort. We will do what we can."

If the lovers of missions in every church will but determine now to do what they can the result in February will bring relief and joy. To that end let us labor and pray, and pray and labor.

SOME OF OUR SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES.

Egbert W. Smith.

1. By the misuse, not the right use, of the Assembly's plan, hundreds of churches are shut against efforts to bring up the Foreign Mission income.

For example, a few weeks ago by special invitation, I visited one of our important congregations ministered to by an excellent man. As they gave last year \$700 to Foreign Missions I asked the pastor's permission to urge them to come up to \$1,200 and thus have their own foreign missionary. He said it could not be done because the Every Member Canvass was to be taken that week and the results divided according to an agreed upon percentage. I asked if an effort could not be made, after the Every Member Canvass had been concluded, to bring the Foreign Mission offering up to \$1,200. This was impossible, he said, because the understanding was that the Every Member Canvass would end financial endeavors for the next twelve months. I inquired if any financial goal had been set before the congregation to be reached by the Every Member Canvass, or, that failing, by subsequent efforts. The answer was "No."

Some such substitution for the real Assembly's plan, which, as interpreted by the Assembly itself, I believe to be the best plan yet devised, are blocking Foreign Mission gains, and often reducing the Foreign Mission gifts, in great numbers of our churches that seem oblivious to the fact that the fixing of a definite and adequate goal, and a sustained effort to reach that goal, are two essential features of the Assembly's plan.

2. The women's societies are now dividing their gifts among all causes, with the result that since 1912, when the change went into effect, their Foreign Mission gifts have increased only \$1,300, though their total gifts to all causes since then have increased \$59,200. (Assembly minutes, 1912, page 22, 1915, page 78.) It has required constant effort on the part of their leaders and this office to prevent an actual decrease in their Foreign Mission contributions. Their

gifts to this cause up to January 1st this year are less than for the same period last year. Not the slightest criticism on any one is intended, least of all on the societies for this change and its results.

3. For the last six years, not counting the exceptional year when the Foreign Mission debt was paid, the people's gifts to Foreign Missions have averaged 63 1/2 per cent of their gifts to the Assembly causes. The Assembly's recommended 54 per cent for Foreign Missions "as a guide to our people in making their gifts" is, therefore, tantamount to a recommended decrease of one-seventh, or nearly \$80,000, in their gifts to Foreign Missions.

Of course if the churches were to reach the \$1,200,000 goal set by the Assembly in its total apportionments to Assembly causes, the reduced percentage, being computed on this very large total, would be sufficient. But, as every one knows, these apportionment totals of the Assembly are never reached, often by several hundred thousand dollars. The actual receipts for Assembly causes last year, for example, totaled \$861,000. Had the Church last year followed the Assembly's "guide to our people in making their gifts," the Foreign Mission debt on April 1st would have been \$142,000 instead of \$63,000.

We are not complaining about or protesting against any of these difficulties. We are simply stating facts that the Committee's situation and problems may be understood.

The effect of the above-mentioned factors, operating during the last few years, would have utterly swamped the work in debt but for one thing. That one thing, humanly speaking, has been the stupendous "special" efforts, through self-denial envelopes, that have marked the closing quarters of the last three years, although May and October have also been utilized to the utmost. By reason of the action of the last Assembly appointing the first three weeks of February as one of the regular Foreign Mission seasons, these efforts are no longer "special" but normal and regular.

An active observance of this season, led by our pastors, with thorough distribution of the envelopes and leaflets, and with Foreign Mission preaching and prayer and self-denial in all our congregations, would lift the work at once out of its embarrassments. If

the pulpit will lead, the people will follow.

A smile is the sun that dissipates the clouds of despair.

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